

Thought I would show you this even though  
it is unfinished and only a stab at an idea.

I wrote it some time ago---in the midst of  
the Hobbing controversy I think. I thought of  
it as something that could be completed and used  
when people are tempted to make exceptions to  
our established press policies.

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*Note:*

*Approved verbally  
as being "excellent  
ideas" by SFG  
7/3/57//1500*

CIA Public Relations Problems---Notes on Material that might be Used to Explain Them

CIA public relations is a dilemma with security on one ~~horn~~ horn and the desire for a favorable press on the other.

The rules of security are theoretically without exception. In practice, security is dependent on ad hoc judgments by those in authority who recognize that rigid security must sometimes be sacrificed in the course of a calculated risk. Such risks are inherent in press-relations problems.

Meanwhile, CIA must compete for appropriations of public money with other government agencies which, to a greater or less extent, use public relations devices to ensure a favorable public presentation of their virtues. There is little doubt that CIA could enter this competition to a fairly broad extent without risking a serious security break---i.e., a disclosure that would actually damage the security of the United States. The FBI has been able to do so even while operating abroad. The military departments, in competition among themselves, have gone sometimes to startling lengths in what they have revealed. In doing so, they have never brought on a catastrophe. There is much that CIA can reveal without harm, including what the public already knows, and much that every foreign intelligence agency knows even if

the US public does not.

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An example would be the Khrushchev speech to the XXth Congress of the CPSU. The Russians certainly know who acquired this confidential talk for Western publication; the fact that CIA procured it has been stated repeatedly in US and foreign journals; acquisition of such material would certainly be the most legitimate of goals for an intelligence agency. Why, then, should CIA not acknowledge this brilliant accomplishment, take credit for it, and profit by improved standing with the American people? Why cannot CIA in general make at least a modest bid for some share of the praise to which it is entitled?

Some of the reasons against such a policy might be summarized as follows.

1. CIA is more than a circumstantial exception to the usual status under which government agencies operate; it is a legally constituted exception. The examples are numerous, the most obvious being the "CIA Act" of 1949 which makes many exceptions including the use of unvouchered funds. In various ways over a period of ten years, Congress has recognized CIA as a peculiar institution whose demands for secrecy are such that it must be permitted to operate in a zone of darkness foreign to the theory and practice of American democracy. It is apparent that Congress has made these exceptions with some misgivings only because it considered

intelligence security important enough to justify them. Congress has even practiced a degree of self-denial in its recognition of CIA's secrecy requirements. Congress, therefore, might well be more offended than pleased if it noted a disposition on CIA's part to blow its own horn while claiming special privileges on grounds that it must be protected from public notice.

2. CIA has been presented to the American public as an exception to normal practices of Government. American newspapers seldom even mention the name of the Central Intelligence Agency without prefixing the words "secret", "super-secret", "hush-hush", and "super-hush-hush". Thus the (probably small) part of the American public that realizes CIA's existence at all, thinks of it as some sort of shadowy monster---necessary because people who are supposed to know say it is necessary---about which no questions are to be asked. This is a favorable attitude from CIA's point of view because a real public ~~demand~~ demand to know more about the Agency could easily be irresistible and ruinous. Any new public revelation about CIA, however, potentially creates a demand for more revelation along with a doubt about the genuineness of the Agency's need for secrecy. For example, the average citizen might be gratified to know that his intelligence agency was able to hoodwink the

Russians in the matter of the Krushchev speech, but he could not help noticing that the "hush-hush" doings of the "super-secret" agency were not quite as thickly wrapped in mystery as he had thought. If he could be told about this success, why could he not learn more? If it is possible to disclose a major intelligence venture of this sort, why is it necessary for CIA employees to blush when asked where they work? The public cannot be expected to understand how the same agency can be "hush-hush" and talk-talk at the same time.

3. Ideal relations with the press require a greater degree of co-operation than CIA can give. If CIA could give out all news requested by press representatives; make news on occasion, and cooperate in publicity ventures when asked, CIA might receive favored press treatment in return. But it is obvious that, no matter how liberal CIA's press policy were made, there would always be a security barrier sooner or later that could not be transgressed. The result, from the point of view of the press, would probably be an Agency that was helpful only when it chose to be helpful. CIA would be accused of dictating what the press could and could not know---of daring to set itself up as an arbiter of what the taxpayer could know about how his taxes were being used. On the other hand, a consistent refusal to give information or to confirm or deny statements regarding CIA, will gain the

respect of the press even though the press might prefer more liberal treatment. Any break with consistency, however, risks the establishment of what the press may consider a precedent, rendering further denials of information more difficult.

4. Any information officially released for publication by CIA becomes an unguided missile. Once information correctly attributed to CIA gets out of CIA's hands, it is public property, not only in the United States but anywhere in the world. However innocent the information may be in itself, it can in no way be protected against any use an enemy of the Agency or the United States wishes to make of it. Where the information appears through no fault of CIA's the same dangers are present, but at least such information can be used against the Agency only as an unproved assertion. It is generally to CIA's advantage for this reason, <sup>not to release information and</sup> to avoid associating itself officially with ~~public~~ any sort of public information, whether favorable or unfavorable, not released by itself.

5. In this connection, it is frequently thought that CIA can avoid the onus of undesirable material published about itself by pointing out that CIA cannot control the press. CIA can merely state that it had nothing whatever to do with the publication in question and thus emerge innocent in the public eye. This may be true in cases where the Agency is merely mentioned in the course of a news

story, but where any published treatment in a credible US journal (e.g. the Harkness Saturday Evening Post articles) purports to describe any part of the Agency's organization or functions, it is likely to be difficult to shake public conviction that CIA was somehow behind the story. The reason for this conviction is logical: ~~namely~~ either the author of the story got his alleged facts from CIA itself or by some other means; if he got them by some other means, CIA's security is unbelievably bad. Hence CIA must have furnished the facts.

6. In cases where material is published damaging to the Agency, CIA can, of course, publicly deny its truth. It is always tempting to deny public statements about CIA that are false, while ~~in~~ confirming or ignoring statements that are true. ~~depending on the nature of the statement~~ Any denial, however, is an affirmation. If CIA were to deny some statements, <sup>as false,</sup> the presumption would remain that all undenied statements must be true. This inescapable form of faulty logic is particularly embarrassing in the case of CIA because there will always be instances where CIA cannot deny false statements without making disclosures that security will not permit.